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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Subcommission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-seventh session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement by Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[14 July 1995]

Violations of human rights: public procedure

1. Serious human rights violations continue unabated in Colombia. The administration of Ernesto Samper has yet to take the concrete steps necessary to address what Human Rights Watch believes are the mechanisms that allow security force agents to commit human rights violations with impunity: the absence of serious investigations, military court jurisdiction over security force agents implicated in abuses, and the failure to aggressively investigate and punish the members of paramilitary groups often working in coordination with the army or police among them.

2. The continuing high incidence of human rights violations is why Human Rights Watch continues to call for the appointment of a special rapporteur.

3. Most of the civilian offices dedicated to protecting human rights, while staffed in large part by dedicated professionals, have no power to investigate, try or sanction security force members. Human Rights Watch believes that one of the linchpins of impunity in Colombia is the practice of trying members of the security forces implicated in human rights violations in military courts, where they have been routinely absolved. This is especially important in the wake of President Samper's decision not to support the "Disappearances" Bill in 1994 because it would have mandated that security force officers implicated in "disappearances" be investigated by civilian prosecutors and tried in civilian courts.

4. Torture, both during interrogation in the field by soldiers and in police detention centres, remains a common occurrence not only for those suspected of having committed political crimes, but for those suspected of having committed common crimes. A recent study carried out by respected human rights groups in Barrancabermeja, department of Santander, found that of 183 individuals detained by soldiers or police between January 1993 and June 1994, 170 reported being tortured, 93 per cent.

5. Particularly worrisome is the establishment by the Government of rural security cooperatives, also called "vigilance associations". As implemented by the Ministry of Defence in 1995, these are groups of civilians working in close cooperation with the police and military to combat guerrillas in rural areas. Human Rights Watch is concerned that these groups are becoming yet another paramilitary group in Colombia.

6. Clearly, the State has so far proved itself unable to either monitor paramilitary groups, investigate them, or prosecute members, including members of the security forces, who commit abuses. Human Rights Watch remains concerned that the Government is giving not only actual but tacit approval to existing paramilitary groups in the country.

7. The following cases remain of special concern:

El Castillo: Since November 1994, the residents of Medellín de Ariari, municipality of El Castillo, Meta, have reported numerous attacks by a paramilitary group calling itself "Serpiente Negra" (Black Serpent), which has sought to threaten and kill those it identifies as guerrillas or their supporters. According to information received by Human Rights Watch, members of this group first announced themselves on 13 November, when they appeared in Medellín de Ariari carrying weapons. As a precautionary measure, community leaders, led by Vicente Prieto, called an emergency meeting with the Procuraduría and other municipal and government representatives. Nevertheless, a few weeks later, Black Serpent apparently set a highway ambush for the mayor of El Castillo and a council member, who managed to flee. One peasant ambushed days later was "disappeared" while another was found dead, his body showing signs of torture. On 24 December, Vicente Prieto was murdered in circumstances that suggest the work of Black Serpent. On 6 January, Belisario Panagos and Alfonso Bohórquez, both members of the Patriotic Union, were shot and

killed. A week later, Arnovio Millán and José Zapata were apparently strangled to death. Community leaders have reported at least six additional murders they believe were carried out by Black Serpent. Black Serpent operates with impunity in one of the most heavily militarized areas of Colombia. Human Rights Watch believes that there is a serious concern about possible collaboration between Black Serpent and the local military and police. According to government sources, there are at least 160 paramilitary groups currently operating in Colombia.

Sabana de Torres: Human Rights Watch has received a series of reports from community leaders of Sabana de Torres, department of Santander, indicating that members of the "Los Guanes" Counterguerrilla Battalion attached to the Fifth Brigade in Bucaramanga have committed murders and have beaten and issued death threats against civilians living in seven nearby villages. According to local human rights groups, soldiers detained 16-year-old Aleixir Orozco on 26 November 1994, and later executed him, dressed him in a guerrilla uniform and presented him as a guerrilla killed in action. In Cano Peruetano, farmers told Human Rights Watch that they have received death threats from soldiers attached to the "Los Guanes" Battalion, who have accused farmers of being "guerrillas and guerrilla supporters". Soldiers also apparently told them that a local paramilitary group known as "Las Motosierras" (The Chainsaws), so named for the brutal way in which they kill their victims, would soon target them. In May and June, human rights workers in the area received numerous telephone death threats.

Trade unionists: Hundreds of trade unionists have been killed and threatened simply for belonging to a union, participating in contract negotiations, or trying to form union locals. In 1994, 101 trade unionists were killed for political reasons in Colombia. Of those, 35 killings took place in the department (State) of Antioquia, one of the most highly unionized in Colombia. According to the Unified Workers Central, which represents 60 per cent of Colombia's unionized workers, three of every five union workers killed in the world last year were Colombian, among them oil workers, teachers, municipal employees and agricultural labourers. Human Rights Watch believes that there is clear, abundant and convincing evidence linking State agents and the paramilitary and death squads often working as their allies or associates to the killings of trade unionists. Other perpetrators include guerrilla groups. Among the most blatant political killings of trade unionists in 1994 were those of two members of the Unified Federation of Antioquia Workers (FUTRAN), which represents most Antioquia trade unionists. FUTRAN Education Secretary Guillermo Marín had reported receiving death threats to government authorities before he was killed on 18 July 1994. Two months later, four heavily armed men forced their way into the FUTRAN office, shot and killed a union employee and crippled for life the FUTRAN human rights secretary. A paramilitary group calling itself Colombia Without Guerrillas (COLSINGUE) later claimed responsibility for Marín's murder. Human Rights Watch believes COLSINGUE may include active-duty police officers. A year later, Human Rights Watch is not aware that anyone has been charged for Marín's murder.

8. The Government has taken some steps to curb violations. In a speech delivered in September 1994, President Samper gave his support to the ratification of Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions. When a combined government-civilian commission delivered to him a report in January 1995 on the Trujillo massacres, the killings of 107 people in 1990, he accepted their conclusion that members of the security forces and judiciary had either been directly involved in the killings of 34 people or had been complicit in covering up the identities of the murderers. On behalf of the Government, he accepted responsibility for the crimes. The following day, an army major who had not only allowed the killings to take place but had been an active participant was dismissed.

9. However, this example also demonstrates the impunity enjoyed by members of the security forces. Although the major was identified five years earlier as a suspect in these killings, he remained in active service and was promoted normally until the commission presented its findings. Since several courts have already absolved him of guilt, in proceedings that are now considered seriously flawed, and the statute of limitations has expired, he will not be retried and will remain unpunished.

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CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

Written statement by Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[14 July 1995]

Contemporary forms of slavery in Pakistan

1. Millions of workers in Pakistan are held in contemporary forms of slavery. Throughout the country, employers forcibly extract labour from adults and children, restrict their freedom of movement and deny them the right to negotiate the terms of their employment. Employers coerce such workers into servitude through physical abuse, forced confinement and debt-bondage. The State offers these workers no effective protection from this exploitation. Although slavery is unconstitutional in Pakistan and violates various national and international laws, State practices support its existence. The State rarely prosecutes or punishes employers who hold workers in servitude. Moreover, workers who contest their exploitation are invariably confronted with police harassment, often leading to imprisonment under false charges.

2. Debt-bondage in Pakistan is endemic and widespread. It is one of the forms of slavery proscribed by the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956, in which it is defined as "the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined". Pakistani laws, such as the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act 1992, are consistent with international laws which seek to eliminate the bonded labour system. But those laws are not adequately enforced. The International Labour Organization (ILO), in its World Labour Report 1993, assesses the problems of debt-bondage in Pakistan to be among the worst in the world. There are no reliable statistics on the number of bonded labourers. Indeed, the difficulty involved in obtaining accurate numbers gives some indication of the magnitude of the problem. While some NGOs estimate that the numbers range into the millions, there is little doubt that at least thousands of persons in Pakistan are held in debt-bondage, many of them children.

3. Bonded labourers in Pakistan suffer a range of violations of internationally recognized human rights. These include the right not to be held in slavery or servitude, the right not to be imprisoned merely on the ground of inability to fulfil a contractual obligation, the right not to be arbitrarily arrested, the right to liberty of movement and the right to freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions. 1/ The Government of Pakistan is complicit in these violations, both by the direct involvement of the police, who consistently arrest bonded labourers under false charges, and through the State's failure to enforce its obligation to protect the rights of bonded labourers guaranteed under national and international law.

4. Debt-bondage is particularly common in the areas of agriculture, brick-making, carpet-weaving, mining and handicraft production. Bonded labour is most widespread in agriculture, particularly in the interior of Sindh and in southern Punjab where land distribution is highly inequitable. Debt-bondage in agrarian regions involves the purchase and sale of peasants among landlords, the maintenance of private jails to discipline and punish peasants, the forcible transfer of teachers who train peasants to maintain proper financial accounts, and a pattern of intimidation of peasant women through rape by landlords and the police.

5. Brick-kilns, which are located on the outskirts of most major cities and towns in Pakistan, operate almost exclusively on the basis of debt-bondage. Bonded labour is also prevalent in the mining industry of Baluchistan, and in Sindh many handicraft labourers are bonded to merchants. Merchants frequently use the police to maintain their control over bonded handicraft labourers. Bonded labourers are also used in the export-oriented carpet-weaving industry. The investigation conducted by Human Rights Watch/Asia, in addition to other studies, 2/ indicates that a high proportion of carpet workers are children, many of whom are bonded. In many cases, it is the parents who force the children to work. In some situations, particularly in the Thar area of Sindh,

children are separated from their families and forced to live and work in enclosed areas which have several carpet looms. Harsh punishments are often meted out to children deemed to be inefficient, involving beating and, in some cases, sexual abuse.

6. The Government of Pakistan is responsible for the maintenance of the bonded labour system. The complicity of the State in the bonded labour system is explicitly illustrated by the fact that employers of bonded labourers are rarely arrested, prosecuted, or punished for holding workers in bondage, or for the illegal confinement, rape or physical abuse of bonded labourers. The failure to punish those who hold labourers in bondage is a clear signal from the Government of Pakistan that the bonded labour system can be maintained with impunity.

7. The police use the coercive apparatus of the State to punitively arrest bonded labourers. For example, bonded labourers who file charges against an employer, attempt to organize other workers, leave their place of work or are disliked by a particular employer can be arrested and put into a lock-up or jail. While illegally detained in lock-ups, bonded labourers are often physically, sexually and psychologically abused. Torture is used to force labourers to desist from registering cases against their employers, extract bribes and intimidate or humiliate the detainees. Labourers have been beaten with sticks, stripped naked, hung upside down, burned with cigarettes, beaten on the genitals and have had their legs pulled apart. Women prisoners are often held in custody indefinitely and suffer a consistent pattern of sexual assault, including rape. Outside jail, bonded labourers are also subject to frequent physical abuse and torture. Over 90 per cent of bonded labourers interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Asia were victims of work-related violence. Such violence ranges from mild beatings to outright torture. Bonded labourers who disobey employers' orders are beaten with such regularity that many of them consider physical abuse intrinsic to their work. Women held in servitude suffer particular hardship. Women bonded labourers are frequently sexually assaulted. If women bonded labourers seek legal recourse after sexual assault, they are subject to a series of laws which equate rape with adultery, an offence for which they can be punished under Pakistan's Hudood Ordinances. While all bonded labourers are victims of a consistent pattern of abuse, Christian bonded labourers suffer double exploitation as religions minorities and as bonded labourers.

8. The bonded labour system makes extensive use of children. Children either work alongside their bonded families or are sold individually into bondage. The widespread existence of bonded child labour in Pakistan is particularly appalling as the Government, which is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has repeatedly pledged to ban all forms of child labour in Pakistan.

9. An effective programme to eradicate the bonded labour system in Pakistan requires the concerted and sustained effort of the international community. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery should press the Commission on Human Rights to censure the Government of Pakistan for its failure to comply with international laws and standards outlawing bonded labour. As a

step towards ending bonded labour in Pakistan, Human Rights Watch/Asia recommends that the Working Group undertake a fact-finding mission to Pakistan, and make recommendations for measures Pakistan could take to eliminate bonded labour.

Notes

1/ All of these rights are contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Pakistan is not a party to that Covenant; however, most of these standards are universally recognized as part of customary international law and therefore binding on all States. In addition, some of these rights are enshrined in ILO Conventions to which Pakistan is a party. Pakistan ratified the ILO Convention on Forced Labour (No. 29) in 1957, the Convention on Abolition of Forced Labour (No. 105) in 1960, the Convention on Freedom of Association (No. 87) in 1951, and the Convention on Collective Bargaining (No. 98) in 1952.

2/ See National Commission for Child Welfare and Development, Special Education and Social Welfare Division, Government of Pakistan and UNICEF, Discover the Working Child (Pakistan, 1990); and Centre for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment, Labour Department, Government of Punjab and UNICEF, Child Labour in Carpet-weaving Industry in Punjab (Pakistan, 1992).

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Item 18 of the provisional agenda

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Written statement by Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[14 July 1995]

1. Two years after the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election, which was widely viewed to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola, the Nigerian political climate is volatile and human rights violations are pervasive. The current Government of General Sani Abacha, who seized power in November 1993, has arrested numerous human rights and pro-democracy activists, imposed constraints on press freedom and progressively circumscribed the powers of the judiciary. Human rights abuses against minorities in the Niger Delta in south-eastern Nigeria have been particularly severe.

2. Communities in the Niger Delta, the source of over 90 per cent of Nigeria's oil, contend that multinational oil companies, in concert with the Government, have ravaged their land and contaminated their rivers. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, has been at the forefront of the confrontation between the indigenous communities of the Niger Delta, the oil companies, and the Government, which has sent in troops to crush local protest movements. Established in 1990, MOSOP has led protests in the region, while seeking dialogue with Nigerian Government officials, as well as Shell and Chevron, the two multinational oil companies that operated in Ogoniland until 1993.

3. The Government has publicly claimed that outbreaks of violence in Ogoniland prior to May 1994 were the result of ethnic clashes between the Ogoni and neighbouring ethnic groups, including the Andoni, the Okrika and the Ndoki. However, a recent investigation by Human Rights Watch/Africa revealed that the Government played an active role in fomenting such ethnic antagonism, and that some attacks attributed to rural minority communities were in fact carried out by army troops in plainclothes masquerading as members of these communities. · Two Nigerian soldiers, interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Africa in different cities in the north and south of the country, said they participated in 1993 military operations that took advantage of tensions between the Ogoni and the Andoni to launch attacks on Ogoniland from Andoni territory. Residents of the Ogoni village of Kaa told Human Rights Watch/Africa that they had seen soldiers attacking their village in August 1993 along with Andoni fighters.

4. Since the 21 May 1994 murders, by a mob, of four Ogoni leaders who had been branded as pro-government, the Government has been engaged in a systematic crackdown in Ogoniland. In the wake of the murders, which occurred under disputed circumstances, the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force embarked on a series of punitive raids on Ogoni villages. These raids were characterized by flagrant human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions, indiscriminate shootings, arbitrary arrests, floggings, rapes and looting. Although major troop movements in the region appear to have tapered off by late August 1994, the security forces reportedly continue to arbitrarily arrest, detain and beat Ogoni civilians.

5. Following the May 1994 murders, Ken Saro-Wiwa and Ogoni activitists Ledum Mitee, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen and Baribor Bera were detained. They are currently on trial before a three-member special tribunal appointed by the Government. The tribunal, which has the authority to impose the death penalty, lacks independence and impartiality because it was set up by the executive expressly to hear this case. The presence on the tribunal of Lieutenant-Colonel Hammid Ibrahim Ali, an active member of the armed forces under the command of General Abacha, renders the tribunal's independence particularly questionable. Moreover, the tribunal's judgement is not subject to review by a higher court, but only to confirmation by the Provisional Ruling Council, which is chaired by General Abacha. The prosecution charged the accused with four counts of murder at the first session of the tribunal on 6 February 1995. The eight-month delay in filing charges against the accused, in conjunction with the procedural irregularities that characterize the trial, strongly suggest that the charges are politically motivated.

6. On 28 March 1995, the special tribunal assumed jurisdiction over the cases of 10 additional defendants, who were formally charged on 7 April 1995, and authorized the holding of simultaneous trials. Since then, members of the tribunal have periodically confused the evidence presented in the two trials. Faced with increasing evidence of the tribunal's bias against the defendants, the defence team withdrew from the case of Saro-Wiwa and the four other original defendants in late June 1995, although they reportedly continue to represent the other 10 defendants.

7. Security forces have also launched attacks to quell protests by communities in oil-producing areas outside Ogoniland, who have similar

grievances. Human Rights Watch/Africa investigated and documented recent attacks by the security forces on four of these communities: Obagi, Brass, Nembe Creek and Rumobiokani. In each case, the local residents initially tried to express their grievances through peaceful channels, although their protests culminated in violence on some occasions. The authorities invariably responded with disproportionate force. In the aftermath of military raids, community leaders were detained without charge or forced to face trial by ad hoc courts.

8. In view of the above violations, Human Rights Watch/Africa calls upon the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to:

(a) Investigate human rights abuses by the Government of Nigeria, including recourse to excessive force in the oil-producing areas, arbitrary arrest and detention, and interference with the independence of the judiciary;

(b) Submit a report of its findings to the Commission on Human Rights;

(c) Adopt a resolution condemning human rights abuses in Nigeria.

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Items 15 and 18 of the provisional agenda

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Written statement by the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[25 July 1995]

Discrimination against the Dalits

1. Dalits is another name for that ethnic group in India frequently referred to as scheduled castes, untouchables, as well as by the patronizing label coined by the late Mahatma Gandhi, the "Harijan" (Children of God). The Dalits constitute 16 per cent or 130-150 million of India's total population of approximately 900-950 million people. This is more than half the population of the United States, and a little more than half the population of the former Soviet Union. The Dalits have been victims of systematically sanctioned persecution by Hindu society since time immemorial. While Indians might well take great pride in their heritage and culture, the shameful fact remains that Indian Dalits continue to be systematically excluded from mainstream Indian society in all spheres of life, apart from their use as slave labour by high-caste Indian "touchables".

2. The following issues are of particular importance as it concerns the human rights situation of Indian Dalits:

(a) Untouchability. While untouchability has officially been abolished, according to article XVII of the Indian Constitution, the practice of untouchability remains part of daily living in Indian society. Any who do not observe this norm are either brutally murdered or otherwise forcefully shown their place in society. Since India's independence, many amendments and resolutions have been passed by the Government, but their implementation has been extremely poor. The data compiled for 1981-1985 show the number of cases registered under the Protection of Civil Rights Acts of 1955 has ranged from 3,332 to 4,087. It should be noted that these are the cases that are registered in the police stations. Countless cases go unnoticed and unreported for fear of persecution;

(b) Atrocities. The Ministry of Home Affairs started collecting statistics of crimes against Dalits in 1974, dividing these atrocities into four categories: murder, grievous hurt, arson and rape. Later, the collection of these statistics encompassed all Indian Penal Code offences in which members of scheduled castes/scheduled tribes were victims. For 1986, the data collected showed that the nature of crimes were as follows: murder, 564; grievous hurt, 1,408; rape, 1,002; other offences, 11,750;

(c) Police atrocities. Neither the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commissioner's report nor the Commission itself mention a word of crimes committed by the police against Dalits, not even firsthand reports by Dalits against high-caste individuals who committed crimes against them.

3. Socio-cultural enforcement of the reprehensible notion of untouchability remains pervasive. Some teachers use intimidating tactics so that scheduled caste boys and girls would drop out of school or college, and not get an education. That Indian Dalits continue to endure even harsher measures to enforce their subjugation is clearly indicated by the fact that hardly a day passes without the Indian press, both national and regional, reporting instances of rape, murder, house burning or social boycott of Dalits.

4. Many high-caste persons argue that untouchability is no longer an issue. While untouchability may be loosening its grip in urban areas, only a small portion of the Indian and Dalit population live in the major cities; 80 per cent of Indians and 80 per cent of scheduled castes live in the villages, which are still the same cesspools of social injustice as they were centuries ago. Rural violence against the Dalits is a part of daily life. Even urban Dalits are not immune from violence. Even though the Government has many rules and regulations on the books whose purpose is to protect the scheduled castes, their implementation has been derailed by high-caste bureaucrats, politicians, police and other citizenry. The politicians and bureaucrats come to the scene of crimes, bemoan them, yet nothing is done.

5. In its seventh report, covering the period April 1984 through March 1985, the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes stated that "as Untouchability continues to be practised without any appreciable abatement,

mostly in the areas in which orthodox values and deeply rooted old-fashioned customs prevail, it is high time for both the central and state government to make a most determined bid to launch a multi-prong attack on this evil practice ...". The Commission's report continued: "An almost unabated perpetration of atrocities against members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continues to be a matter of great concern for the commission. This situation tends to negate the efforts of freedom and equality for all as enshrined in our constitution. Despite protective provisions in the constitution, the majority of the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes still continue to be suppressed due to their socio-economic conditions." In a letter to the President of India dated 23 November 1988, Dr. B.D. Sharma, Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, stated:

> "Investigation of the Constitutional safeguards for about a quarter of our people, located at the margin, struggling for equity and justice against adverse forces, rooted both in tradition and also the nascent social and economic order, is an unenviable task. This is particularly so when these forces operate with an aura of progressive modernization, and are deemed to be intrinsic to the process of structural transformation."

6. While the Government has plenty of rules and regulations for the protection of Dalits, it has not demonstrated the will to implement them, be it at the district, state or federal level. The Government's lack of commitment is clearly demonstrated by the fact that it took seven years to appoint the new SC/ST Commissioner, Dr. B.D. Sharma. Dalit issues are raised at election times in order to get Dalit votes; afterwards, there is a generalized apathy with regard to Dalit issues. How long can Dalits tolerate this situation? Many contend that Dalits have every right to bear arms to protect themselves from high-caste and police oppression. As a Dalit leader and member of Parliament, Mr. Ram Dhan, warned: "Constitutional safeguards should be implemented or the nation will be crippled."

7. In so far as India is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other United Nations human rights treaties, it is recommended that the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities send a fact-finding team to India to get firsthand information on the ongoing, pervasive and flagrant human rights abuses endured by the Dalits, and provide the Indian Government with recommendations for the establishment of a credible system for Dalit human rights protection, as well as for monitoring the system's performance on a consistent basis so its effectiveness and success may be measured. While a new systematic approach with regard to the Dalits may be necessary, surely a minimum requirement is to ensure the enforcement and implementation of existing laws, which may include the appointment of special courts to process cases which concern untouchables and atrocities/crimes committed against them. In the entire union of India, only 6 out of 21 states have such specially appointed courts. This practice should be extended to all states. More Dalits need to be recruited as policemen and magistrates in crime-prone areas. Police need to be sensitized to untouchability and crime issues. Victims need to be compensated, and the

compensation indexed to the cost of living. A veritable crusade of programmes of public education should be launched to sensitize high-caste people to the plight and aspirations of the peoples who are at the bottom of the totem pole. The Dalits have a right to equality, even in a deeply prejudiced society such as that of India, and only the pressure of international organizations and world public opinion can galvanize the Indian Government to a true commitment towards changing cultural attitudes which have been domestically acceptable for centuries.